Exit Interview with Chris Mathews, Presidential Reorganization Project, Richard

**Pettigrew's Office** 

Interviewer: David Alsobrook of the Presidential Papers Staff

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Transcribers: Winnie Hoover and Lyn Kirkland

**David Alsobrook**: I thought, first of all, Chris, I would ask you a little bit about your recollections of the background for the Presidential Reorganization Project, what you recall about it, how did it come about, and who had input.

Chris Matthews: Yeah. Well, it began as a campaign commitment on the part of the President made during the '76 primaries. My own recollection of it was -- I guess it began with the series of interviews the President did for major magazines in '76 in the spring -- Fortune, US News, The Washington Post Outlook section, Business Week -- where he laid out what he saw as the main emphasis his administration would have, would take in the area of making government more effective, cutting down on bureaucracy, regulatory excesses, exercising fiscal restraint, and basically defining what you might call a pragmatic, positive approach to government which recognized the government had gone too far in a lot of areas and that traditional liberalism really didn't have an answer, that it was more important to try to clean up the act of government, make it more streamlined and effective rather than posture -- continue to posture for more government activity -- activism.

So I think that's what really distinguished Carter's candidacy from the other liberal Democrats, Jackson and Udall, and the others that didn't run in the sense that he recognized the limitations of government, but he also recognized that government had a role to play, so he wasn't a conservative in a traditional sense.

So out of the campaign committee, well, first of all, it was totally unformulated what he would do in reorganization. All he said was that he would cut down the number of government units, which was a kind of a, I think, a symbolic way of saying, "I believe in less government or less government proliferation about government agencies." But he did not have any plan to reorganize the government. When their transition began, I understand -- and this is before I came here -- Harrison Wellford was given the task of coming up with some directions for the project to take and some notions of how it would be implemented. Then Bert Lance came on and was given the nut -- OMB [Office of Management and Budget] was given the nuts-and-bolts responsibility for reorganization. Initially in the spring of '77, Dick Pettigrew was to be the chairman of a presidential commission on reorganization, which was then, sort of a blue-ribbon panel, which would screen the proposals which worked their way up from OMB. That never was created.

**David Alsobrook**: Okay, and you're getting ready to tell me about this blue-ribbon commission that didn't, that didn't quite develop.

**Chris Matthews**: Well, that was -- there was a dispute. Pettigrew wanted to -- well, he was asked to develop a plan for a blue-ribbon group and presidential commission, which would be kind of a political brokering and screening unit, which would take what OMB had developed in a nuts-and-bolts form and then decide what should go as a presidential initiative in reorganization.

Bert Lance was able to prevent that from being created. He wanted OMB to have a clear ride. Pettigrew was left as a result not as head of a commission but as sort of a political advisor, broker, and salesman for what OMB was developing. So he had a role in an input level in terms of making recommendations and possibly forming some of the OMB proposals, but in fact, there was not going to be any brokering going on. OMB would make the recommendations. So that was the influence of Bert Lance, and that was sort of an early decision, though whatever reorganization became, it was a product of that decision or didn't become. And subsequent to that, there's always been a difficulty in identifying what Pettigrew's role was vis-à-vis OMB, and it's been a difficult relationship a good part of the way, I think. Other people would probably give you a different account.

When we got here, there was a decision made that reorganization would be bottom-up, as they say, which means the term implying that it would look for problems and solve them rather than have a master scheme. It would also not be top-down in the sense it would not be aiming at increasing the presence/control of the government but increasing the ability of government to serve the people, deliver services.

However, saying that, nevertheless, the fact is that the reorganization's team, where they hired some operatives from the beginning, believed that the President expected reorganization to be structural, major changes in boxes, different things.

So on the one hand, we were giving lip service to the idea that it was to improve government services, tangible the way the government affects people, but in fact, what we were doing or what had been doing is attempting to do something dramatic that would look -- fulfill what the President perceived as his campaign commitment, which is to do something bold and dramatic, meaning move something around, you know, eliminate something, consolidate something, break up something.

So there's been that all along. We have to do something dramatic. We have to create a department. We have to get rid of a department. We have to do something like -- and all along that has been sort of the guiding principle because people on the staff level, like Harrison, basically non-politicians, felt they were taking the President's thing almost like scripture. What he promised literally in the campaign is what he was meant to deliver in office, which maybe a more shrewd politician would say, "Well, let's go with the essence of what we tried to get across in the campaign but deliver on the spirit of it. Let's find the

most appropriate means to meet the public's demand that the government be made more efficient and forget about what we may have said in the campaign about cutting the number of agencies or going those routes when maybe they weren't the problems."

And also, the Georgia experience was that you had a proliferation of agencies and you had to tighten them up, whereas in the federal government, we only have a few government departments, let's face it. There may be a lot of sub-units, but the fact of the matter is consolidation is not the answer. The answer may lie in other areas, but it's not in consolidation.

So Pettigrew's operation, now just talking from this end, what we've done from the beginning is we did a number of things. First, we set to dramatize reorganization by having a White House conference on organization. We spent weeks trying to put together a program for that. We'd bring in top people that would talk about what's wrong with government, what could be done about it to make it more efficient, really tried to dramatize the effort to improve government rather than to start off with some -- a bunch of plans but to try to dramatize, sort of like this Camp David thing, bringing the top people, make a big deal about how we're going to meet that commitment. That was completely shot down by OMB. They said it would create false expectations of what we would do, which we thought was bullshit because we didn't have any plan in mind of what we were going to do, and why not create some expectations, get people involved in the process?

Then we conducted a casework survey of all Congress and Congressional offices to ask them what was the people's real problems with government? Their constituents, their caseworkers, we asked them to do it, not the political people in the offices but their own humdrum caseworkers who solve people's problems with the government all day. That's all they do in most Congressional offices is to tell us what agencies were causing them trouble and what was wrong with them.

**David Alsobrook**: I think I saw a copy of that or something that certainly rings a bell with me. Is this the -- is it something like that?

**Chris Matthews**: That is the -- that is --

**David Alsobrook**: And they responded to it?

**Chris Matthews**: This is the --

David Alsobrook: Yeah.

**Chris Matthews**: This is the original.

**David Alsobrook**: Okay.

**Chris Matthews**: This is the President's report.

David Alsobrook: Okay. So you --

**Chris Matthews**: This is our report to the President.

**David Alsobrook**: So you drafted that then, right? You worked on this yourself?

Chris Matthews: Yeah.

David Alsobrook: Okay.

**Chris Matthews**: No, we came -- I came up with the idea to do this, and this was our idea to do this. It was a Pettigrew operation, which OMB finally went along with.

**David Alsobrook**: What kind of --

Chris Matthews: They didn't do any -- as far as I know, we got very good response. It was majorly consistent rightwing, leftwing, Democrat, Republican. Everybody had the same problems with the same agencies. It was a great consistency. We had a great [Eifler] foundation here for doing some things. We had -- everybody -- you know, we were going to Congress. We were asking them what ought to be done. They work with people who have problems with the government all day long. That's what they do nowadays. They don't legislate. The good part of the time, they do this stuff. It was limited because it only dealt with people's direct relationships with the federal agencies, which is limited. Most people deal with state agencies, funded programs rather than direct dealings with the federal government, so it was limited. It was mostly disputes over disability payments, labor department, or HEW [Health, Education, and Welfare] disability payments, social security disability payments.

So it was limited in what it found out, but we thought it was a good political basis upon which to launch a program. Well, we sent around our raw data which we got. So we wouldn't be accused of badmouthing agencies, we sent it to all the agencies. We sent it to all the members of the reorganization project. I don't think anyone in the reorganization project read it, but we delivered.

**David Alsobrook**: You mean the people in OMB?

Chris Matthews: OMB. If they read it, their answers were pro forma and cursory. They -- see, what was -- I'll show you what happened. When we were doing is trying to do a bottom-up approach, and they had already been launched on their various projects; they took the attitude toward these projects that anybody would. They had to create a certain project -- create the Department of Education, do something in border management, do something in an economical development programs. They were -- that's what -- basically, they're all academic graduate student types. Their job was to create a term paper, and that's what they were working on.

And then when we came to them with a real world situation, they weren't interested in that. They had to get their term papers done, and that's what we had. We had these academic types in OMB basically putting together what they thought was their projects, which they were told to do. It wasn't bottom-up. It was top-down. They were told what to do. Come up with this idea, come up with that, some kind of consolidation, some kind of -you know...

**David Alsobrook**: Chris, I was curious, at this point, did the Domestic Policy Staff have a lot of input with OMB during this period?

**Chris Matthews**: Domestic Policy Staff was very sensitive to the fact that we were conducting this survey because they said it would badmouth the Carter administration, and we said, "We're only here a few months now. If we're afraid to do it now, we're going to be afraid to do it a lot later." And so we ended up saying we wouldn't release it to the press and we'd be very cautious about how we'd put the information out.

**David Alsobrook**: So, so what happened with that?

Chris Matthews: We did. We really got a lot of press on it. You know, we got -- a lot of magazines wrote articles about it, and we hit the worst agencies, and a lot of people thought it was a good idea, and the Congressmen -- the letters from the Congressmen were overwhelming. Said it's the best idea we ever had and fantastic you're coming to us with these ideas, and, you know, it was a good stroke for the Congress, I thought. But I don't know what happened to it. We sent them all back there. OMB's management staff under Howard Messner did a little looking at some of these agencies that were particularly aggravated -- aggravating. I don't know what came out of it.

**David Alsobrook**: Chris, did this little project occupy most of your time when you first came to the White House?

**Chris Matthews**: First year. Well, it took three or four months of this.

**David Alsobrook**: Do you recall what you did after this was out of the way?

**Chris Matthews**: At that point, we had to start selling reorganization proposals. There was the Executive Office of the President Reorganization came out in late summer of '77. The International Communications Agency, which wasn't much to sell, but and then we had to start thinking about how we were going to sell the Civil Service bill, which came up in the spring, the equal right -- the Equal Employment Opportunity Reorganization plan, Federal Emergency Management Administration, and then last -- the last year, the ERISA, Employee Retirement Security -- Income Security Act, Reorganization, which was a minor one.

Mostly last year, we spent our -- starting in the spring, we started spending all our time on Civil Service. So I'd say the sequence that I can remember, we were spending time on the White House plan -- White House conference that didn't come off but a Case Works

survey and spending a lot of time on Civil Service.

**David Alsobrook**: Was that when you started putting out these? This was mainly your product, right?

**Chris Matthews**: Yeah, I came out with that. It looked like the White House News Summary. That was what our idea was. There was one in '77, wasn't there?

**David Alsobrook**: I think so. I may not have it with me, but November of '77?

Chris Matthews: Yeah, and I think we did one --

**David Alsobrook**: October 19th?

**Chris Matthews**: Yeah, that's the first one.

**David Alsobrook**: Yeah, early.

**Chris Matthews**: So that sort of tells you where we were then. Yeah, this sort of gives you a run-down on what was going on.

**David Alsobrook**: Yeah. How would you describe your particular role within Dick Pettigrew's operation?

**Chris Matthews**: I handled the press for all the Reorganization Project, including what was going on at OMB, selling Civil Service, selling all these other things, putting the press plans together, you know, which contacts we're going to make, how we're going to try to sell everything, how we're going to promote it.

**David Alsobrook**: What was a typical day like during that period, hectic?

Chris Matthews: Well, hot and cold. Lot of cold periods. Lot of hectic periods in the spring. I guess the most activity was around Civil Service selling, the National Press Club speech and all the magazine coverage and everything else we got for that and building it up was a big issue, calling it reorganization, which is really the significant thing we did since we got here, was to take Civil Service reform, which the President had never really mentioned in his campaign, and declare that the centerpiece of the Reorganization Project. And a lot of the press recounted, as per our efforts, said that the President delivered on his number-one campaign promise.

**David Alsobrook**: Now, I think this is pretty important, but I'm not sure I quite understand who made the decision that this is the way it would be played. I don't quite understand that. I mean was this something that the Civil Service Task Force....

**Chris Matthews**: Well, I'll tell you where it really developed. We were sitting in Jim Fallows' office deciding how to announce the Civil Service Reform bill, and I argued that

if we didn't announce this as part of an overall effort to reorganize the government, it would be forgotten. It would be another Civil Service bulletin.

And the best way in terms of selling to Scotty Campbell and the people working there was why don't you make it the centerpiece of something really important rather than something that's so profoundly important floating alone, which nobody's going to believe. And so we said this is the long-awaited centerpiece, and we wrote this first half of the speech or the introductory part of the speech at the National Press Club last -- I think it was March, saying -- talking about the commitment to make the government more efficient for the average taxpayer. And we were going to take a taxpayer's perspective rather than a federal employee's perspective, which is the way Campbell tends to sell the thing. And that decision was a combination -- was probably made finally by the speechwriters. They bought our -- the speech outline I did, and then Harrison went along with it, and Si Lazarus believed in it, and I think Stu Eizenstat believed in it. I'm not sure. It was magical because I mean it was one of the things we sit down and write the memo and then all of a sudden we're doing it, and then all of a sudden that's the one at the National Press Club, and they said, "Oh, yeah, we have an outstanding offer from them to do the speech over there," and everybody knows the National Press Club's a joke, but the fact is, it's a great platform, and we also were able to have it be termed one of the President's regular press conferences because he took Q&As afterwards, which meant it was nationally televised live, this speech on Civil Service Reform, which made it a big deal because every TV, every -- the thing about having a press conference televised in the daytime is that every newsroom in the country watches it, every editorial writer watches it live. Why? Because he doesn't have to get a handout two weeks later. He has it right there in front of him. So your impact is pretty broad and immediate, and it established it as a major initiative.

**David Alsobrook**: Do you have any idea who wrote the final draft of this speech?

**Chris Matthews**: Jim Fallows. No, Grif Smith wrote it; Griffin Smith did it. It's a combination of Jim Fallows and Griffin Smith, who was deputy at the time.

**David Alsobrook**: But you did have -- you wrote an outline suggesting --

Chris Matthews: Yeah.

**David Alsobrook**: -- where they should go?

**Chris Matthews**: He took a little bit further from my -- my initial outline was to just make it an overall reorganization speech with a mention of Civil Service reform. He stepped back from that and made it a Civil Service speech framed as a civil -- as part of our efforts to reorganize the government.

David Alsobrook: And you mentioned Harrison Wellford and Si Lazarus --

**Chris Matthews**: They were all involved in that study.

**David Alsobrook**: What was -- was the Civil Service Reform Task Force already set up by that time?

**Chris Matthews**: No, it came on after that --about that time. That was under Les Francis and -- Les Francis ran that.

**David Alsobrook**: Could you tell me a little bit about how that ran? Who were the people involved in it?

Chris Matthews: Okay, Les Francis, Wayne Granquist --

David Alsobrook: That's OMB? He's an OMB --

**Chris Matthews**: He used to -- he worked it. -- Scotty Campbell, Si Lazarus, Steve Simmons.

**David Alsobrook**: Now, that Steve Simmons --

Chris Matthews: Tom Belford - yeah, he's from Domestic Policy.

David Alsobrook: All right.

**Chris Matthews**: That's his specialty, Civil Service.

**David Alsobrook**: Okay.

**Chris Matthews**: Tom Belford, myself, Jay Beck, who works here; I think we were all usually at those meetings.

**David Alsobrook**: Okay.

**Chris Matthews**: Then there were people like Freddy, the people that were working from -- on detail from different agencies, like on the Veteran's Preference issue, like Freddy Wexler was over here from Labor--somewhere she was detailed from. And that was about it.

David Alsobrook: Do you have --

**Chris Matthews**: Bob Thomson, I think, showed up a few times from -- Congressional Liaison.

**David Alsobrook**: Did you meet once a week or what?

**Chris Matthews**: Every night eventually. We'd meet around six o'clock up at night in 447.

**David Alsobrook**: Could you describe what one of these sessions would be like?

**Chris Matthews**: Basically a wrap-up of what happened that day and a discussion of what was going to go on the next day.

**David Alsobrook**: And Les Francis usually ran the operation?

**Chris Matthews**: Yeah, and Scotty would do all the talking. Les was a manager; Scotty was the brains behind most of this thing. Scotty did -- along with Si were the brains, mostly Scotty, because he did the lobbying effort. He did most of the lobbying, I thought.

**David Alsobrook**: So Campbell did a lot of the work on the Hill then or--?

Chris Matthews: Yeah.

**David Alsobrook**: Well, what sort of -- you said Si Lazarus had a lot of input, too. How would you describe his role?

**Chris Matthews**: He worked with Scotty. They'd go to the Hill together.

**David Alsobrook**: Talk with you a little bit about the role of Si Lazarus and --

Asking you a little bit about the role of Si Lazarus and Scotty Campbell in the task force. I think you already talked a little bit about Campbell, and you were getting ready to tell me something about Si. Said something about he was the brains behind the --

**Chris Matthews**: Well, in the daily strategizing and politician work, I think he worked with Scotty, panel legislation stuff, how to get stuff done.

**David Alsobrook**: You said you had -- Simmons was the only one from Domestic Policy?

**Chris Matthews**: And Lazarus.

**David Alsobrook**: Lazarus.

**Chris Matthews**: Lazarus is his superior over there.

**David Alsobrook**: How would you describe, overall, the connection between this office and the Congressional Liaison office with all of your projects?

**Chris Matthews**: Well, the Congressional Liaison effort on OMB under Terry Straub and Gary Fontana does most of the congressional stuff. However, in the case of Civil Service -- of the Veterans' Preference stuff, Pettigrew did a hell of a lot of personal

lobbying with Congressmen. He met over 100 Congressman. Just -- he did a lot of direct lobbying on behalf of Civil Service Veterans' Preference change. That was the one case where he did it on his own. Otherwise, lobbying's been done by the lobbyists.

**David Alsobrook**: I was really curious, along the same line; did your office work closely together with Frank Moore's office? This is the thing I was really getting at.

Chris Matthews: Yeah, with Les Francis, yeah.

David Alsobrook: Yeah.

**Chris Matthews**: I would say that Terry -- Terry Straub was Congressional Liaison from OMB for Reorganization for a long time, and now he's working for Frank Moore directly, but he was sort of the liaison.

**David Alsobrook**: And this is Civil Service reform mainly, you're talking about?

**Chris Matthews**: Now, Paul Newton did a lot of this Civil Service reform stuff for Scotty. I mean he was his Congressional Liaison person. So it was Paul Newton and Terry.

**David Alsobrook**: Now, Paul Newton, did he work for Civil Service?

Chris Matthews: Yeah. He's head of Congressional Relations from Civil Services.

**David Alsobrook**: Okay.

**Chris Matthews**: And he worked with Les Francis. They were --

**David Alsobrook**: Chris, you know you described about that first speech that the President gave at the National Press Club. Could you tell me about some other opportunities that you had to put this message across about Civil Service reform?

**Chris Matthews**: Well, a number. Let's see, there was -- the President had the Town Meeting in Fairfax, Virginia, with federal employees, which was during the House consideration of the bill, which was important. It was sort of to show the President as interested in federal employees' welfare and not being anti-federal employee. Talking about their questions. A lot of them were apprehensive. I think it helped. We got Joe Fisher [Demo cong. VA] to support the bill. Herb Harris [Demo cong. VA] didn't. Of course, we always knew what his position would be. He's kind of a--

David Alsobrook: Do you feel like that was one of your more successful --

**Chris Matthews**: It wasn't televised. It was probably successful in terms of publicizing the issue in Washington among locals more than nationally.

**David Alsobrook**: It was televised locally, right?

**Chris Matthews**: Yeah, I think so. You know, I was out that night, but it was televised locally. The other one was -- in fact I was in -- I was out of the city. That's why I didn't watch it.

The other one was they had a little awards ceremony, Management Improvement Awards, for federal employees to sort of dramatize the President's interest in creating incentives across the board for federal employees. It was a way of symbolizing that. We had it in the White House Rose Garden one day and -- last summer. Didn't get any publicity. [Laughter] It was a disaster. [Laughter] It just didn't sell. Nobody bought it.

**David Alsobrook**: Do you feel like you were more successful with using the television type selling jobs more than, say, through the printed media?

Chris Matthews: No, our best effort was through print, through editorials. Editorials supporting Civil Service reform were overwhelming, and that's largely a function of Scotty Campbell going around the countryside and holding editorial conferences. He's a real academic and an intellectual. I mean he can come across pretty effectively with editorial writers. He knows more than I'll ever know about the subject or care to know, and he knows how to -- how to portray what he's doing in a way that grabs people. A little bit too pro-federal Public Service for my taste, but that's his bent. He believes in Public Service. He believes in the public sector, more than I probably do, in philosophy. In real life, I work here [laughter], but philosophically, he's much more pro-bureaucratic, and maybe that's not -- but overall, they bought it as a good government issue that imbibed particularly as a bread-and-butter issue, which I think we could've done maybe a little better job selling it as. But productivity is more important. He just saw it as a good government issue.

**David Alsobrook**: Did you have a lot of dealings yourself with local press across the country, editorial writers, and so on?

**Chris Matthews**: Not many, 10 maybe. Ten at the most -- different times I called him up. Mostly, it was what we mailed out.

**David Alsobrook**: So Scotty Campbell did a lot of that?

**Chris Matthews**: He did the rest of that. He did a lot of traveling.

David Alsobrook: You know, you just mentioned your --

**Chris Matthews**: See, he could do it because he could go out and meet with federal employees and under that cover, he could then go out and set up an editorial meeting with somebody that day. I mean it's different than just arriving in San Francisco and saying, yeah, let's do some editorial conferences. What are you doing here? But he was going to have to meet with federal employees at the regional center. And that night that we

announced this thing, he had a hook-up with all the regional centers. They had press -- each of the 10 regional centers, we had press coming in talking to him on this open mike, talking -- you know, having different reporters who were covering the issue from different cities asking him questions. That's part of that selling.

**David Alsobrook**: Campbell also has a pretty close relationship with the President, too, doesn't he?

Chris Matthews: Does he?

**David Alsobrook**: I'm just basing this on what I've seen on television, like the Fairfax meeting you mentioned. Is there anything to that?

**Chris Matthews**: I didn't think so. I think the President likes winners, and that was a winner. I mean I haven't heard any connection since this event, have you? As far as I know, he's passed out of the President's *Weltanschauung*, as far as I know. He wasn't at Camp David, was he?

**David Alsobrook**: [laughter] I was going to ask --

**Chris Matthews**: I mean that's probably a weakness of the administration. Hasn't rewarded people like Scotty as well as it should have. People that are winners ought to go to the top and not just be forgotten after they get through winning. And I'm not sure if Scotty got –he's a good salesman.

**David Alsobrook**: Chris, you've touched on something I think sounded interesting, your own philosophy of Public Service and Civil Service reform and all that stuff. Could you add anything on that that you haven't already covered already?

**Chris Matthews**: Well, I think one of the things that attracted me about Carter was he has a prejudice against the public sector. He won't -- he doesn't say it that way. He has a prejudice against -- he may give lip service or support for TBI instead of the old rugged kind of New Deal public works. Get out there and build a dam-type thing, which has a certain productive aspect to it, visibly productive.

But as for bureaucracy, I don't think he's very big on it. I think he likes the simplified life, and he thinks probably the government is symptomatic and the real cause of most people's complicated existences. And it's obviously not that simple. But I think that's something about him that was attractive in the beginning to most people that voted for him in the primaries. I think actually we're turned off to regimentation, and I think he was an opponent of it. And I think that's when he had some zing in his campaign, when it was obvious that he was not Scoop Jackson. He's not guns and butter. He was not, "Let's do it all," and I think that's what made Udall seem definitely out of step when he was running because he was still giving lip service to every social cause he could list, and Carter wasn't giving it at all. Carter was saying things like, "I may not back Humphrey-Hawkins until I think about it a little more." It's a hell of a signal to send when

everybody else is lining up to sign on. You're the only one that says no, or -- "Say, I think I might try to balance the budget." For Democrats to say that is unbelievable. Even to give credit, lip service, to it, if he hasn't done it, even if you think about it as a goal, it's something that would separate him from a Humphrey. Humphrey would say it but he'd laugh. I mean nobody would ever, ever seriously take him at his word. And Kennedy wouldn't even say it, but Kennedy's never got elected on that stuff anyway. They know where their action comes from; it comes from government activism.

**David Alsobroo**k: You used to work for Ed Muskie, though, didn't you? What would Ed Muskie say?

Chris Matthews: He's about politically the same as Carter. I think he's a post-war liberal. I mean he believes in -- he's an internationalist, which I like. He's a -- he believes in the public sector, but I think he believes in the notion that there's such a thing as a public agenda and it can be met. He's not a Social Democrat. He's not a Mondale. Mondale's a Social Democrat. Let's face it; he looks for opportunities for the government to get involved in people's lives. He zealously seeks opportunities for government action. Muskie's not like that. Muskie believes in a sense of social welfare, of a social justice more than a welfare, the notion that the government has certain things it has to compensate for in an economic society. It has to make up for certain injustices which result from a free-market system, but he doesn't believe that the government has a constant role to do more. He's not a socialist or even a Social Democrat, whereas I think a lot of people in Washington had been until recently. Now, they're all getting defeated, but anybody that gives lip service to the fact that the government has to do more and more is not getting elected these days; Kennedy's an anachronism. Even Kennedy is trimming his sails and focusing on things like trucking de-reg and something he would consider far too mundane a few years ago but now he rides and he has to send some signals like parole reform and things like that. He's smart enough to know that his bluecollar constituents are looking for a little support on this thing, but he hasn't -- his family hasn't -- well, actually, the Kennedys aren't as liberal as everybody always thought they were, but he was the most liberal of all, and I don't think he's staying that way. He's not going to face a general election that way, I would guess.

**David Alsobrook**: I think that's a good point, too. Do you think the issue of reorganization could become prominent again in 1980, or do you think --?

**Chris Matthews**: Well, it could be a negative issue; it could be a positive issue. It could be a negative issue if Bob Dole, for example, who's, if he were smart or -- he's very smart--- but if he would do his homework and think about something, which would be a rarity on his part, if he would sit down and do his homework on the campaign promises, he could have a field day, and it would be fun. I don't think his staff guys are that smart. I don't think he's ever had the kind of staff that would sit down and figure out, "What did Jimmy say? Hey, that's interesting." He could have a lot of fun with it.

Carter, on the other hand, could -- since he's President, can define terms, and he could define -- not a total success, but he could say, "I've done things that nobody else ever

tried to do. I've turned the tide on regulatory overkill. I've made the Federal Reserve productive for the first time. I put people on pay -- basically get paid for what you do. I put merit into the merit system. I've cut down on some agencies. I've created for the first time an Energy Department. Maybe it's not working, but it's at least focusing on something. Institutionally, I've done some other things. I've broken up HEW."

I mean, it's all how you frame these things. You don't "create a Department of Education"; you "break up HEW". I mean if he says -- if he gets control of the rhetoric, he can win on it and still win it for him, I think. It's not a big winner, but it's a nice thing to talk about on the stump. It's just a nice thing to fill in the time when you're out on the stump talking to people about real problems. It's not going to command any national television debate or dominate Kennedy or anybody who might run against him, but it's an answer to guys like Reagan, who are running on a -- if they ran on a totally negative anti-government campaign, he could say, "Here's some positive things I've done to make government more effective." You can't just say no to government. You have to deal with -- you have to acknowledge it has a role to play.

The question is do we make it more effective or not, and I proposed and implemented some steps to make it more effective. That's better than just saying it's no good. What did Ford ever do, what did Nixon ever do? What are you going to do? That may come up, but I -- I don't know which way it will break.

David Alsobrook: I was curious --

**Chris Matthews**: It's not an automatic winner. [Laughter]

**David Alsobrook**: Your experience with Muskie and perhaps other political experience you've had, did any of that help prepare you for what you have done here? Is there any way anybody can prepare to work for a presidential administration?

**Chris Matthews**: Oh, yeah. I don't know, I've been writing all these speeches for the last two years here for Pettigrew and other people for president -- presidential messages and talking points, as we call them here, and all that. That all came out of my brain. I mean I didn't -- I mean it's not new. I'm sure it came from somewhere. It came from reading newspapers since I was 13. I don't know where it came from. Obviously, it came from, you know, conventional --

**David Alsobrook**: What were you doing before you came over here, though? You were over at OMB?

**Chris Matthews**: With Muskie.

**David Alsobrook**: You came straight from Muskie's office?

**Chris Matthews**: Since '77. My relationship here is weird. I mean if you want to know, it's sort of an odd thing. We worked -- we're deputies to [Richard] Pettigrew -- Tom

Belford, Jay Beck, and I worked for Pettigrew. We were hired by Pettigrew. Jay has a long-term relationship with Hamilton [Jordan] but basically was formally hired by Dick. All three of us worked for Pettigrew. However, we are paid by the President's Reorganization Authority money, which was given to OMB in '77 as part of the appropriation. So we were all paid as part of these 32 professionals that were hired by OMB even though we were hired by Pettigrew. We were detailed instantly, or whatever you want to say. That's how the money was -- and it was probably the big deal where Dick Pettigrew and Bert Lance had a cut of a pie--he got the short end of the pie. He got three people. Lance got 30, basically, of those slots. So that's how it -- just formally, if that ever confuses anybody.

**David Alsobrook**: So since the first day you were here, it's just been you and Tom Belford and Jay Beck and --

Chris Matthews: Jay came on later, but --

**David Alsobrook**: -- working for Pettigrew?

**Chris Matthews**: And we never had any dealings with anybody else in terms of being hired. We didn't have to be cleared through anybody else. He hired us. We were his people; we'd been his people, but we've had to work all the time with Harrison [Welford]. Of course, our job was to sell proposals which had generally come out of OMB.

**David Alsobrook**: You've already mentioned your -- something about your relationship with Jim Fallows' office and others. Would you tell me about some other White House units that you've worked very closely with?

Chris Matthews: Greg Schneiders.

David Alsobrook: Okay.

Chris Matthews: Media Liaison, which was under Pat Bario. It was under Walt Wurfel.

**David Alsobrook**: You worked very closely with Walt Wurfel when he was here?

**Chris Matthews**: Yeah, and Jody's office. All the -- I had to write all the fact sheets. We'd just do all this stuff here, you know, fact sheets and speeches and all that. We'd type out everything here and the White House would just approve everything, but we did it all -- briefings, setting up briefings and stuff like that.

**David Alsobrook**: And along the same line, I wish you'd clarify this for me. Like, okay, Jim McIntyre over at OMB would report directly to the President over -- on various things concerning --

**Chris Matthews**: Right.

**David Alsobrook**: -- Re-org, right? Well, how did the paperwork work on that? Would reports from here go into his office and he would incorporate that into what he takes to the President, or --

Chris Matthews: Yeah.

**David Alsobrook**: How does -- curious about that.

**Chris Matthews**: Presidential decision memoranda go through OMB, in this case. So they would send in a decision memorandum with our comments, as well as the comments of DPS and the affected agencies.

**David Alsobrook**: But McIntyre is the one who reports it?

You know, Chris, you mentioned several reorganization projects and aspects of your projects that you feel like are -- were successful, and then you mentioned a couple that you feel like weren't too successful. Could you tell me a little bit about what you think has worked best for you in selling all these projects?

Long Pause in tape

**Chris Matthews**: Well, in terms of public recognition, the only one to get any real sizable public recognition was Civil Service. I mean I would say the Casework Survey we did got more publicity than the other reorganization plans.

The press generally -- the White House Press-- generally is not interested in reorganization because it's just not -- there's something always -- by definition almost -- something more important happening every day in the White House than reorganization. No matter what you did in reorganization, there's something probably in foreign policy or in any other domestic policy that would probably be more stimulating to the White House Press Corps, which can only really write one story a day, than this.

Our success in breaking through that -- and we could've done it just as easily with a reorganization plan -- was simply to break through to the White House and get the President to make it a major issue and act like it was a major issue to him. Reorganization was important not because it's -- it's never important. Reorganization could've happened under any other administration. It wouldn't even make the press. Who cares? It's only important politically because Carter ran on it. Moving this around to that or changing this to that is not of any great interest to anybody. Most presidents, you couldn't care less. If Johnson moved something around, it wouldn't have been a big issue. If he tried to move the Forest Service to Interior, who cares? It wouldn't have been able to be remembered, but it's all memorable or significantly politically because Carter made a big fuss about it in the campaign that he was going to do that kind of thing.

So I mean it doesn't surprise me that politically reorganization's a bore, although when you work in it all the time, you're shocked that everybody thinks it's the total bore that it

is. I mean people say, "So what, you know, what does it mean to me?" whereas Civil Service reform, we managed to do bring that -- we did manage to bring that to the forefront in terms of the White House Press Corps by having a big day about it and really leading up to it pretty well with a lot of promotion, and I guess the success there was to promote it with the weekly press by teasing it all over the place and giving -- you know, expanding it and outlining it but don't quite give it away. *Acting* as if it's a major issue, I think, works.

The other thing is to go to editorial writers first and forget -- don't have to worry -- not to expect that editorial writers can get enough information or enough enthusiasm for a subject by reading the wire stories they read, but you have to go with them with information. You've got to address yourself to them. I learned that on the Budget Committee when I was with Muskie. You have to go through editorial writers. They didn't even talk to the other reporters generally. They're readers. Most editorial writers are readers, people that like to read, and they sit down, and you've got to get them material that they can read.

**David Alsobrook**: Is this where you think that Media Liaison probably did a pretty good job?

Chris Matthews: Is a good job on that stump, yeah, because I think that they're pretty objective, too objective, maybe. They get the material out and it's read -- it's used. A lot of times, Media Liaison provide editorial writers with material against us, and I've seen that in certain part of education issue, an idea which is almost impossible to sell to a thinking person. You know, intuitively: "what do we need another government agency for?" You know, how do you convince somebody that you need one? And a lot of times, we've sent out the material on these things, and they've used our material against us, you know?

**David Alsobrook**: Are you talking about the education bill?

**Chris Matthews**: Yeah. There's a case where I say the best -- the less publicity, the better.

**David Alsobrook**: Why?

**Chris Matthews**: Because it's an idea that cannot be sold. The whole climate of the country which led to Jimmy Carter's election is the same climate that is repelled by the idea of creating a Department of Education, I think, don't you?

**David Alsobrook**: Well, I'm not really paid to think in this position [laughs]. It is hard to express my opinion without -- I think it's a valid point. I think --

**Chris Matthews**: But I know it isn't totally true because I mean I know it by our own experience. We go out and we argue with reporters and see time after time it doesn't work. They don't buy it. You can give them the best argument you think you've got and

you spend all the time in the world with them, and then you read the editorial and it is negative. So that should lead us to believe we shouldn't be out selling something like this. It doesn't work, so let's cool it and let the Congress decide the issue. We may have to take a few bad editorials, but let's not make it a national issue like we did Civil Service reform. Don't build it into a big national question if you think the public's answer is going to be no.

If you build up the Civil Service Department to a big national question because you think the Congress acting alone would never pass it, whereas with the public breathing on their back, it would pass it. Civil Education Department, the Congress would probably want to vote for because of the strength of the education lobbies, and we'd just as soon not have a lot of public attention focused on it, and we'd just as soon let it pass as an in-house issue and no big deal and get the credit from the ND -- NEA and other labor--education groups and not make it a big national issue on editorial pages, you know?

It depends on the issue. If you have an apple pie issue like we did in Civil Service reform, you yell it from the rooftops. If you have an issue which sounds awful -- regardless of whether it's a good idea or bad idea, if it sounds awful, you don't bring it out and make it an issue. It's like the candidate who's winning the election doesn't demand a debate.

**David Alsobrook**: I think another point that you brought up is worth talking about, too. You mentioned something about breaking through to the President with your issue of trying to bring your -- I guess bring your issue to the attention of the President and then to the attention of the American people. I didn't quite follow --

**Chris Matthews**: No, no, I didn't mean to the attention of the President. I mean to the President to making it a major presidential initiative. I meant a public role, his public involvement to make that a paramount issue. I mean to show that it's part of his day; this is a big thing he did that day.

**David Alsobrook**: I'm not sure I quite understand what you mean about breaking through. I thought --

**Chris Matthews**: Well, a lot of times, we will get reorganization things signed by the President, endorsed by him, but where is his presidential involvement? He's not out there yelling about it. He's not talking about it. He's not cutting ribbons. He's not doing things that are tangible to people.

It's like what he's doing on energy now. I mean he's getting involved in it. Everybody said it was bad that he wasn't getting involved in it. You know, it's not just signing memos; it's being somehow physically, constantly there on the subject, and he can only do that to a certain number of things, identify with them, or he'll look like a fool, a gadfly if he runs around with 20 different things every day. So he sort of has to limit what he wants to get identified with to give sort of an image, a clear image, and I think with reorganization, he's tended not to make it a second tier backburner sort of issue, except

for Civil Service reform.

And we did it -- we had a big East Room ceremony for the Civil Service or the Civil Rights reorganization last year. That was a big thing. We had it in February. A lot of people were in the room, minority black leaders mainly. It was a big thing. It was a very big ceremony.

**David Alsobrook**: Still, as I recall that, I don't remember an awful lot of press coverage of that.

**Chris Matthews**: You mean Civil Service, the civil rights?

David Alsobrook: Civil rights --

**Chris Matthews**: Well, the only thing good in the press that came out of that was *The New York Times* had a big picture of Kennedy, Mrs. King, and the President on the front page, and he had seen that the next day, which we thought was really nice. [Alsobrook laughs] I mean it was the best minority press the President's ever gotten, I said. I mean --

**David Alsobrook**: Yeah, very quiet sort of thing, you know.

Chris Matthews: Now, what we were doing, we're sending up a bill to increase the role of the EEOC [Equal Employee Opportunity Commission]. I mean, this is a Civil Service bulletin. I mean, why is that a national news story? Whatever it was, it was because we made it into it. I don't think it was nationally a political issue or a publicity issue. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe I could've sold it a lot better, but, you know, I don't see any natural desire by the press to cover these issues. They have to be force-fed.

**David Alsobrook**: Can you tell me anything about the work you've done with the Trade Bill?

Chris Matthews: [sighs] Not much so far. It's -- we had that briefing two weeks ago, invited all the lobbyists, all the trade magazines, economic reporters from the major newspapers, then we had a briefing. I've sent out copies of that material to several of the major editorial writers. We have not decided yet whether to do a mailing to editorial writers across the country on the issue yet. We're not quite sure what our proposal is, where it's going to end up.

I'm supposed to be putting together a plan on how to sell this thing the rest of the way, but it's been chopped up in terms of the first couple of days of exposure on the Hill. They laughed at it. Roth, rather, really gave it a hard time. I don't expect that that's going to be a major selling issue. I just don't. I don't think -- it's a public issue. It's esoteric. I mean the connection between government-organizational structuring and extra promotion isn't clear to most people [Alsobrook laughs], and making it into a bread-and-butter issue of major concern to people is not easy.

**David Alsobrook**: What's the hardest...?

Chris Mathews: I don't think people intuitively think organization has anything to do with how government's effective or not. I mean I think people liked Jimmy Carter's campaign pledge about reorganization because it sounded like, to me, here's a guy who's going to worry about how things work because he cares about the structural reorganization. But the actual thing, the structural reorganization, the box shuffling, I don't think many people intuitively think that's got anything at all to do with whether something works well or not. They may say, "Oh, yeah, there may be too many government agencies," but they don't really think that's the problem.

**David Alsobrook**: What are they thinking?

Chris Matthews: Well, they think there's too much government. There's too much government. Not numbers of agencies, just too much government. They want a guy who thinks about the efficiency of government because that means he's probably thinking about how much tax to charge just intuitively. If he wants government to work more effectively, he's more tight with the dollar, which is probably what most people wanted to see in a president, and he's worrying about whether the trains run on time. He's probably worried about whether we should have -- how many trains, you know. He's thinking like that, you know. I think -- I'm not sure if the public has an answer what they want, but they want less of what they -- they want less taxes, and they want just a lot tighter ship, and Carter promised them a tighter ship, and they thought that he would try and move in a couple of directions like reorganization, but I don't think they actually felt that the number of agencies was a crying issue one way or another. I'm sure that the polls would show that to you; Caddell would do a specific poll on what they expected of Carter-- but what they expected and what they cared about were two different things.

I mean if they thought he was going to cut the number of agencies, this is very interesting. But if they said he's going to do something like cut down the number of regulations, I think I'd be a lot more intrigued by it.....or cut the number of federal employees. He's sort of done that. I mean the figures are pretty conservative. We haven't gotten any increase in the federal government since we've been here. You know, even counting the contractees and the contracting out and some of those other kind of non-counted stuff, we haven't gone up in the size of government. It's possible to gone down, measured in a number of ways.

So, besides, the government hasn't grown vis-à-vis the GNP [Gross National Product]. Sort of been a holding pattern here, maybe a slight -- you know, as the economy picked up the last couple of years, it's been a reduction in the size of the GNP devoted to the public sector, which is sort of consistent with what Carter said--the bottom line, consistent. Now, how much of that was active policy, and how much was residual? It's probably a legitimate question to ask. Politicians tend to take credit for the bottom line though.

**David Alsobrook**: You know, earlier, you mentioned this thing about the Georgia idea

about cutting and having fewer numbers of agencies, and so on. Do you think that's why they pushed that idea because they tried an endorsement?

**Chris Matthews**: Yeah. And then I find out later that a good deal of what was cut in Georgia wasn't, in fact, cut. It was these advisory committees and boards and commissions that didn't have a whole lot of staff. So it was cut there. Was not -- you know, it wasn't substantial services or anything. There wasn't any cut in the government effort. There was a cut in the numbers of agencies [laughs].

David Alsobrook: Do you think this whole thing --

Chris Matthews: I mean that's just this -- I mean it's just as trivial as what it would be to say that getting down -- cutting down by 3 or 400 the number of advisory committees like we've done, is it delivering by one-quarter on the President's promise to cut the number of agencies from 1900 to 200? I mean that's absurd. I mean those 400 -- you know, you're going to compare one of them to HEW as the government unit. I mean what the heck? Their total budget's like 50 million. So he tells me there wasn't a whole lot of riffing [reduction in force] going on when they were -- I mean if there was any staff there at all, they found jobs somewhere else in the government. That's just not -- it's just not legitimate to make that into an issue, but I don't think anybody's going to do it either.

**David Alsobrook**: Yeah, that was my next question. I was curious -- do you think anybody could ever cut the number of agencies down that far, you know?

Chris Matthews: No, nobody would want to go from 1900 to 200. No one would ever try to. Carter never really tried to. He cut down a lot of these units that are sort of marginally important. The advisory committees -- I mean they're nice to have. You get outside input. You don't have to pay a person per diem, you know. Basically, dollar-a-year people. I mean you're getting advice from maybe that sort of Camp David continued, you know? What's the government supposed to do? Can't hire experts. Can maybe use them.

I think a good part of the Carter administration can be attributed to inductive thinking, don't you? It seems to me that if you look at everything Carter's done or tried to do, it's inductive. It's not deductive. It's not based on a philosophy; it's based on an experience---- in Georgia.

His Civil Rights campaign, his Human Rights campaign is a function of his belief that segregation hurt the South or it hurt the quality of life, that it was wrong.

His belief in -- his South African policies almost identically is a transfer of that. It's not an appreciation of the history of African colonialism. It's not at all that. It's appreciation of his own background and how he thinks that should be felt around the world.

If you ask me where he came up with this idea about reorganization and the government being made more efficient and deregulation, it's a fact when he was a small businessman, he probably had heard or had somebody complain to the commerce -- the Chamber of Commerce all the time about regulators and OSHA [Office of Safety and Health Administration] regs and stuff that bugs small businessmen----paperwork.

I'm sure it was totally a personal experience he had with government that made him not like government. The fact that he was a small businessman and didn't particularly rely on corporate power, rely on public sector activity. He was his own man, basically, probably is a function of the way he looks at what the government's role should be vis-à-vis everybody. It should be -- you know, stay out of their hair.

**David Alsobrook**: Still, Chris, you may have seen some scholars have argued that he's a neo-Progressive, you know, and that his whole thing about reorganization is tied up in his quest for efficiency. So I guess you can look at --

**Chris Matthews**: Why is that progressive? To be efficiency-oriented?

**David Alsobrook**: Well, when they say neo-Progressive, I think they're talking about the type of Progressive that's sometimes associated with early 20th century America. When I say progressive, I don't mean like progressive, the dictionary definition; I mean like the -- in the political tradition of the American Progressivism, you know. But --

**Chris Matthews**: I'd say that he's not a traditional conservative in the sense of being a Reaganite anti-government person. He's a mix, but I think that mix is inductive. It has to do--not with any philosophy he learned from his grand pappy or anybody else. It's not something he read about in a book or he heard about or he read some comment by some professor in economics. He got that from his basic experience in Georgia.

We got into this because it's the basic feeling I have of this administration, if it has strengths or weaknesses, it is grounded in the fact that it's parochial, and that's its strength and that's its weakness....its strength in that it knows what people's real problems are in one microcosm in the United States and has developed a philosophy or an approach to government which comes directly from that experience in Georgia, which is the real people's experience in government, and that's what Jimmy Carter gets elected on, if he gets reelected -- it's what he gets reelected on; that he senses the people's concern with government. He may not be an effective president, as people would like to have, but he shares that feeling towards government, which is his strength.

The weakness comes exactly from the same experience. His experience isn't broad enough perhaps to have the kind of vision that maybe would arrest and give a compelling direction to the country. But yet every time he goes back to the sensing of the people's problems, he's with them. The next -- you know, it's the "Where are we going?" is the thing -- it's not an effective one.

But sensing the frustrations and the fears of people, I think he's very good at, and I think sensing their disillusionment with government; he's still very good at that. And I think it's really where this administration is coming from. It's not coming from any tradition.

It's -- and you'll find very few philosophers around the President, so you have one guy operating on the basis of intuition and not intuition so much as just first-hand experience and a lot of people trying to keep neat notes on what he's saying so they can keep up with what we're supposed to be doing. And that's why you have all these decision memos and the fact the President can't delegate because he -- if you have a philosophy, if you're a lefty or you're a righty, or whatever you are, it's easy to delegate. You hire a bunch of people to think like you and you tell them to do it, right? You get a bunch -- if he was a simple liberal, he'd have about 20 Stu Eizenstats doing everything for him, maybe more liberal than Stu. We'd just have a bunch of these guys. If he was a conservative, we'd have 20 Jim McIntyres.

But since he doesn't have a clear-cut deductive philosophy, it's very hard to say, you know, hire 20 -- he's also closed-mouth. He probably doesn't hang around with a lot of people who have long bull sessions about what he stands for. But maybe he has one or two friends like Bert Lance and [Charles] Kirbo, who know where he stands.

We had one of them--lucky enough to get him to come up here-- and then he gets in trouble and he has to go back. So he [Carter] doesn't have anybody up here that can speak for him. He doesn't have many peers that think like him. I think Bert Lance could probably explain to you who Jimmy Carter is and what he stands for.

I don't think there is anybody else around who could do that, and that's why in his span of control, it's got to be him personally. I think that's one of the problems is that he doesn't have something he can say, "All right. Do something like we did with TVA [Tennessee Valley Authority]. Come up with a program tomorrow," you know. He doesn't do it like that. That's why there's been a very lack of -- there's been a great deal of lack of White House direction of the Reorganization project. Like the President has not ever said, "This is what I want done." He's never said that.

And I think that is one problem with it-- is there's never been to say, "Here's what I'd like you to do," then call the staff and say, "These are some of my objectives, and here's the way I'd like you to go about it, and this is what I'd like to see at the end of it all." Never, ever, ever any of that. Never once laid out his plan. He asked the staff to come up with it.

**David Alsobrook**: I was thinking like back in early '77 when he called Jim Schlesinger in. I thought he called him in and said, "Come up with an energy plan," but that's just one man there rather than a staff. Is that what you're saying, he never told the staff to come up with something as a whole, right?

**Chris Matthews**: Well, I'm saying that he didn't do it -- he didn't lay out a framework, a general direction for philosophy, approach, and then say, "Fill in the details." He said, "I want the government reorganized." That's really all he said.

I honestly don't think he gave much direction to the reorganization effort in terms of having a definite goal in mind. He had a campaign commitment, a general tendency towards reductionism, cutting down number of agencies, a sense that it should -- you know-- that the people were concerned about government efficiencies, but I don't think he had a goal. I know he didn't. It's never been anywhere.

It's just not -- check with Harrison, Harrison and Jim McIntyre, and if there is -- or if you ever get to Lance, because I think to those people, maybe he did give them a cue. I don't think he ever gave it to us. Never gave it to Pettigrew. I don't know where it is, his vision of what it was all supposed to look like. I'd bet heavily that there was never any such notion.

**David Alsobrook**: Want to ask you a couple questions here at the end about yourself. Okay, you worked on the Hill and you worked down here. Which do you think is the more difficult job? Are they both...?

**Chris Matthews**: It's better working here, psychologically.

**David Alsobrook**: What do you mean?

Chris Matthews: You don't have to work for a guy like a senator or a congressman. Over there, you're always working for somebody else, it just drives you crazy. I mean no matter how good a staff person you are, you're still a staff person on the Hill. I've never been a general counselor or anything like that, but I imagine if you're a staff director of a committee, you're a hotshot, but you still end up being basically the butler of the member, whereas down here, people leave you alone. You know, you work for somebody else, but it's not prince and pauper, you know. It's much more business like and less like a feudal society, like the Hill.

**David Alsobrook**: Do you find you make more independent decisions down here than you did up there?

**Chris Matthews**: You've got a chance to do your own -- to develop your own work plan here. On the Hill, you're always running after senator trying to clean up, make up for -- catch up, really.

I think the quality of the people on the Hill is pretty damn high, though. I think the time I worked with on the Senate Budget Committee is better than the time I had worked with here in terms of capability. I had to work -- sort of like I worked with Muskie, who had a hellava staff, just unbelievable tough. His state office staff is not good, the people who work on foot. The people who worked in the Budget Committee were top-notch. Doug Bennett, who's head of the AID [Assistance to International Development] now, staff director, he's really good.

**David Alsobrook**: Are there certain pressures you found down here that you don't have up there?

**Chris Matthews**: I find the pressures always awful and if there's a briefing or something

going on some day, anything can go wrong. I always find it hair-raising. It's the same; it's the same thing. You can get in just as much trouble up there as you can here. I'd think about something going wrong. I think: this is the same. It's always the same. You wait for the last minute. You think something's going to go wrong. If it doesn't, take a breather.

**David Alsobrook**: Have you got any future plans that you can tell me about?

**Chris Matthews**: No. Stay here somewhere or another. I don't know. That's what I'm worried about all day. Pettigrew is leaving August 24th. I mean I've got to make a plan. I may end up staying with McIntyre to some extent, but I don't particularly want to do that.

**David Alsobrook**: I know you're probably not worried about things this far in advance, but like 10 years from now, where would you like to be?

Chris Matthews: I have no idea.

**David Alsobrook**: [laughs heartily]

**Chris Mathews**: I don't have any idea. I could be -- every once in a while, I think I could go work in a Latin-American army somewhere. I'm that free. I could just run off and join the circus.

**David Alsobrook**: You mean as a soldier of fortune?

**Chris Matthews**: Yeah, I could just go do that.

**David Alsobrook**: The soldier of fortune?

**Chris Matthews**: Yeah, I could just go do that. I just -- I think about going back to Africa in some -- I was in the Peace Corps over there. I'd think about doing something like that.

**David Alsobrook:** Where were you?

**Chris Mathews:** Swaziland, which is South Africa. It's near Mozambique and South Africa. It's a small country between. Think about being a columnist. Everybody thinks about that, you know. Not serious enough to go out and kill myself to become one.

**David Alsobrook**: At some future date, somebody might want to talk with you again and flesh out some of the points that we went over today. There's no way in an hour or so that we can cover everything that you did in almost two years, but appreciate the time.

**Chris Matthews**: I think we did it.

**David Alsobrook**: Appreciate the time.

**Chris Matthews**: I think we covered it.